

VZCZCXYZ0001
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLP #1981/01 2592313
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 152313Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8518
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 8340
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 5695
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 9653
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 6870
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3948
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 4253
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 5772
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 6565
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 1316
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0118
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 001981

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/16/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [ODIP](#) [OFDP](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: WHAT EVO TELLS HIS PEOPLE

REF: LA PAZ 1942

Classified By: A/EcoPol Chief Brian Quigley for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) Summary. A member of congress with President Evo Morales' Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party provided PolOff with rundown of Morales' latest meeting with MAS congressional representatives. Morales allegedly told the congressmen that "new friends" like Venezuela and Iran could make up for any loss in U.S. assistance, that it was time to push the government agenda forward and jail opposition prefects (governors), and that he would only leave office "as a corpse." Morales also asked for help denouncing Ambassador Goldberg only hours before declaring him persona non grata. The MAS member of congress said a third of MAS congressmen are moderates who object to distancing the government from the United States, but are too afraid to speak out. End Summary.

With Friends Like These... Evo to Replace USG with Rogues

¶2. (C) During a September 10 meeting with ruling Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) congressmen, Bolivian President Evo Morales hinted that he was going to declare the Ambassador persona non grata, but that they should not worry about the consequences. According to MAS congressional representative Ana Lucia Reis (strictly protect) Morales conceded he did not know what, if any, ramifications the decision would have, but he predicted the USG would simply send a new ambassador next year with the change in administration. Even in the worst case scenario, Morales assured his MAS congressmen, "You don't need to worry, we only get a minuscule amount of assistance from the United States."

¶3. (C) Morales explained that Venezuela and new allies like Iran would replace any assistance lost from the USG, using the opportunity to expand on his "very successful" September 1 trip to Iran. Evo allegedly claimed Venezuela already gives more assistance to Bolivia than the United States. (Note: Venezuela's "official" annual assistance to Bolivia is about \$50 million. End Note.)

Morales: Hell No, I Won't Go

14. (C) Concerning constant pleas he step down and rumors of coups, Morales told the congressmen "I am telling you again, I will only leave office as a corpse." Reis said Morales was extremely confident in the wake of ostensibly obtaining 67 percent of vote during the August recall referendum and equated the results with support for the government's "change" agenda and the new MAS draft constitution. "This mandate means now is the time move the revolution forward." He said regional opposition (Media Luna) prefects and business leaders were criminals and would be sent to jail. Presidency Minister Juan Ramon Quintana, who also attended, allegedly added that "there is plenty of jail space in Cuba for them." Morales outlined a strategy to starve the Media Luna of international sympathy by fomenting violence and blaming prefects. He seemed, in Reis' opinion, coldly unaffected by the violence and death in "his country."

MAS Moderates Mute as Evo Calls for Denouncing Ambassador

15. (C) Reis said the September 10 Morales announcement PNGing Ambassador Goldberg (reftel) made her "ashamed of my country." She contended that at least a third of MAS congressmen do not believe the charges against the Ambassador and want to continue close relations with the USG, but are too afraid to say anything back to Evo, adding, "This is not Brazil ... where you can just say what you want with no consequences."

16. (C) Reis said despite "the current political atmosphere, which is moving us toward civil war," Morales conducted a very typical and perfunctory meeting. As is "normal" for meetings with MAS congressmen, Evo berated, insulted, and ordered as MAS congressmen nodded their heads. Reis had considered speaking up for a softer line with the Media Luna, but eventually decided such an act would be futile and put her in unnecessary jeopardy. She said she learned her lesson when she tried to speak up a year ago and was shouted down by Morales and an advisor. "Evo does not listen to anyone except (Minister of Government Alfredo) Rada, Quintana, and (Minister of Defense Walker) San Miguel. What's the point?"

17. (C) Evo scolded the group, as he has done in past meetings with MAS congressmen, for failing to attack the Ambassador. "Am I all alone in this fight?" he asked rhetorically. (Note: The next day, four MAS congressmen put out a full-page newspaper advertisement attacking the Ambassador. End Note.) He told congressmen to help him publicize supposed links between the USG and Media Luna opposition leaders. Morales added, shouting, "Your job is to make the Media Luna look like a bunch of crazies."

Comment

18. (C) We have noted an increasing reluctance from government-aligned contacts to talk to us or be associated with us. Reis is an exception and also an advocate of USG programs in her native Pando. PolOff with experience in Chavez's Venezuela notes that when he first arrived a year ago, he had no problem meeting with government officials, MAS party members, or El Alto social group leaders. Now phone calls go unreturned and meetings, if they can be arranged at all, are in discreet locations. The fear factor so prevalent in Venezuela is unfortunately becoming the norm in Bolivia. End Comment.

URS